

## **Guardian Building**

500 Griswold Street

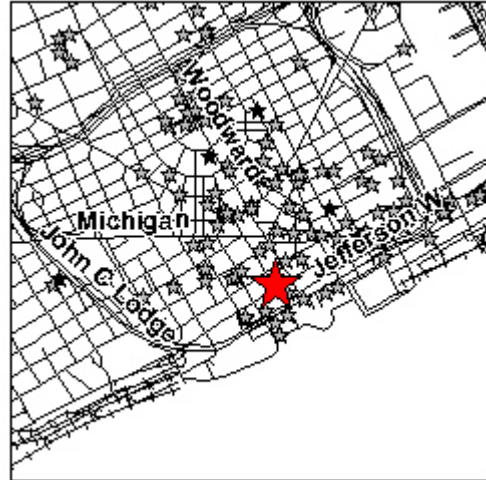
Local

State

State Marker

National           ✓           6/29/89

National Landmark ✓       6/29/89



### **Aerial view of the Guardian Building**

Photo courtesy of National Park Service

### **Historic overview:**

Completed in 1929, the Guardian Building, then known as the New Union Trust Building, is a bold display of architectural materials. This skyscraper reaches 485 feet, with 40 stories. The Union Trust Company wanted a cordial, friendly image with the public that could be comprehended quickly if one was driving by— thus the warm and color of this building. At closer look, awed visitors to the new building saw: craggy contours that looked as if the entire structure had been chiseled from a cliff; exterior walls in a strange brick accented with glistening colored tiles; and unfamiliar angles stemming from the Aztec. The ornate interior caused the Guardian Building to be known as "the Cathedral of Finance", and was decorated with elegant and symbolic art, with daring modern materials. The main portion of the building is faced with an orange-tan colored brick which architect Wirt Rowland helped formulate. The brick became so popular that the manufacturer later marketed it under the name of "Guardian Brick". Tiles from Detroit's Pewabic Pottery decorate the interior and exterior of the building.

Unfortunately, six months after the completion of the building, the stock market crashed and the Union Trust Company failed. The company reorganized in March of 1930 under the name of Union Guardian Trust Company, and the building became the Union Guardian. In 1942, the building was taken over by the U.S. Army and sold at auction in 1952. In 1975 the structure was sold to Michigan Consolidated Gas Company. Restoration of the striking Guardian Building was completed in 1988.

